

# **System Configuration Team (SCT)**

## **Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26**

### **Meeting Notes**

**October 12, 2000**

#### **Greetings and Introductions.**

The October 12 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at NMFS' Portland offices. The meeting was chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and facilitated by Trish McCarty. The agenda and a list of attendees for the October 12 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

#### **1. Review of Proposed FY'02 CRFM Program Measures List.**

John Kranda distributed Enclosure C, the final ranked list of FY'01 CRFM program measures; he noted that while there may still be some further discussion of the cost of some line-items, this is the CRFM program for next year. Kranda added that the items highlighted in yellow are deferred or not included in the program; items highlighted in purple are Bonneville Dam Powerhouse 1 decision items (the "offramp").

The group spent a few minutes discussing what is and is not included in the 2001 CRFM funded project list; Kranda noted that, as it currently stands, the total cost of the FY'01 list is about \$87 million. Based on what he has heard from Washington D.C., it appears that Congress will appropriate about \$80 million for the CRFM program in FY'01. Depending on the amount withheld for savings and slippage, said Kranda, it may be necessary for the SCT to sharpen their pencils once again; if savings and slippage can be restored in FY'01, then we may be pretty close, budgetarily speaking.

In response to a question, Kranda said the Corps will know how much is going to be deducted for savings and slippage when the appropriation is finalized. Frequently, Congress will withhold up to 10% for savings and slippage, Kranda said; if that's the case this year, we're looking at a \$72 million work allowance.

Moving on, Kranda noted that the Corps submitted the first cut of the FY'02 CRFM program to Congress in June; those line-items are listed in Enclosure C. A refined version of the CRFM program will be re-submitted in late November or early December; it will be factored into the President's budget, which will be released in February. Prior to that re-submission, said Kranda, there is some time for the SCT and others in the region to look at the proposed FY'02 CRFM budget to make sure nothing major is missing, and that there are no major disagreements with the items that are listed.

The group spent a few minutes discussing the potential impacts on the FY'02 CRFM program of the hydrosystem performance standards and the one- and five-year implementation plans called for in the 2000 FCRPS Biological Opinion, if that document is signed, as expected, in December. Hevlin observed that the important thing, at this point in the process, is to ensure that all of the line-items that any of the SCT participants feel may be necessary are included in the draft FY'02 CRFM project list, including all of the measures called for in the BiOp. We always narrow the list down later, he said, but at this point, we need to get the whole package out on the table. Kranda agreed, but noted that the total cost of the FY'02 line-items that are already listed may be as much as \$134 million (depending on which option is chosen at Bonneville), which is well in excess of the highest historic CRFM appropriation.

Led by John Rowan, the group then devoted a few minutes of discussion to the possibility of expanding the geographic scope of the SCT's responsibilities beyond the FCRPS projects to include other systems as well, notably the Yakima and the Willamette. Are you talking about having the SCT prioritize Willamette projects alongside Snake and Columbia River projects? Kranda asked. Conceivably, Rowan replied; when you include the estuary in the Biological Opinion mix, obviously there are flow-related activities in both the Columbia and Willamette systems that affect estuary conditions. To me, said Rowan, it doesn't make sense to consider activities on the Willamette and the Columbia/Snake systems as being completely separate, given the fact that they are coordinated systems.

Hevlin noted that this is not the first time questions of this nature have arisen at SCT; in the past, he said, the IT has made the decision about the SCT's most appropriate sphere of action. He said he would have no objection to raising the question of SCT scope to the IT once again, given the wide-ranging program laid out in the 2000 BiOp. After a few minutes of discussion, Kranda said he will find out what planning and coordination mechanisms already exist for the Willamette and Yakima systems,

and will report back at the next SCT meeting. It was agreed to wait until Kranda provides this information before making a decision about whether or not to frame the SCT scope question for IT consideration.

Hevlin also asked that, between now and the next SCT meeting, the other participants review the list of projects shown for FY'02 in the current CRFM measures worksheet, with an eye toward any items that may need to be added or deleted. We will then discuss the FY'02 list in more detail at the November 8 meeting, Hevlin said. At Hevlin's request, Kranda said he will also provide an updated version of the same project-by-project list of CRFM program measures he has furnished to the group in the past.

## **2. Update on the Effort to Renew the Bonneville Project Five-Year Plan.**

Hevlin said that, at the last SCT meeting, NMFS asked the Corps to begin updating the Bonneville project five-year plan. You might recall that the SCT worked on that plan as a group about three years ago, Hevlin said; NMFS is now asking that the Corps take that plan off the shelf and update it with all of the new research and engineering studies data that are now available. This is groundwork for the decision we'll need to make in February and March about whether to pursue surface collection, extended-length screens, a hybrid, or neither, at Bonneville 1, Hevlin said.

This request was presented to FFDRWG two days ago, said Hevlin; FFDRWG will be having a meeting on the Bonneville five-year plan on November 3. That meeting will be open to any SCT participants who would like to participate, Hevlin said. Rock Peters said the Corps' first priority will be to lay out all of the structural options and alternatives at Bonneville; we will bring those to the meeting, he said, as a starting-point for the discussion of how to frame them for analysis.

Ruff noted that, with its two powerhouses and its spillway, Bonneville is one of the most complex projects in the Columbia/Snake system; it is also, of course, the lowest project in the system, so this five-year plan, which will lay out how fish will be routed between the three avenues of passage, is extremely important. The Bonneville plan will also be a part of the overall five-year system configuration plan called for in the 2000 BiOp, he said. Ruff added that this is a good opportunity for all interested parties in the region to provide input into the Bonneville project five-year plan.

Ruff also read briefly through the language on mainstem, tributary, estuarine and early ocean habitat activities in Section 9 of the 2000 BiOp (please refer to this document for details). Ruff noted that there are a number of habitat-related measures called for in the draft FCRPS BiOp, many related to monitoring and evaluating the biological effects of various structural and operational improvements. I'm not sure how many of these activities, primarily studies, are included in the current version of the

CRFM measures spreadsheet, said Ruff, but the action agencies would be expected to implement them under the new Biological Opinion. There are a couple of line-items, replied Kranda – Estuary AFEP and Mainstem Habitat Research. Ruff noted that one of the specific actions called for in the draft BiOp is the development of a numerical model of the Lower Columbia River, including the estuary and plume, that can evaluate changes in habitat associated with changes in flow.

Essentially, said Ruff, the utilization of the lower river and estuary habitat by salmon is one of the uncertainties highlighted in the BiOp; the primary purpose of these habitat-related activities is to begin gathering more information on how these fish use shallow-water habitat in the lower river and the estuary. The group spent a few minutes discussing this information, raising a variety of concerns related to funding and integration with the Council's ongoing habitat program; ultimately, it was agreed to discuss this agenda item further at the next several SCT meetings.

### **3. Discussion of the Development of Five-Year Plans For:**

**A. The CRFM Program.** Hevlin reiterated that the first five-year implementation plans are due from the action agencies in January 2001; he noted that the Bureau of Reclamation has already made it clear that it will be difficult, at best, for them to meet this deadline. Rowan said there was a meeting yesterday between BPA, Reclamation, the Corps and Battelle; one of the purposes of that meeting was to discuss the one- and five-year planning processes. He observed that it does not appear to be crystal-clear, at this point, what a five-year plan is, what it should include and how often it should be updated. Rowan said BPA has retained Battelle to do a national search of similar implementation plans, such as the restoration plans for the Everglades, Glen Canyon and Cal Fed, in an attempt to glean those activities that worked. In other words, said Rowan, BPA is just beginning to come to grips with what a five-year plan should include, and how it might be developed.

He added that, in BPA's conceptual view, the five-year plans will not contain a tremendous amount of specific detail; that detail will be found in the one-year plans. The group spent a few minutes discussing what level of detail may be appropriate for each point in the planning process; ultimately, it was agreed that the Bonneville Dam five-year plan should provide some useful guidance, in terms of level of detail. In response to a question, Ruff said NMFS is talking to the action agencies about the schedule for the completion of the initial one- and five-year plans; given the fact that the BiOp will not be finalized and signed until mid-December, it is now thought that February or early March may be a more realistic delivery date for the one- and five-year plans.

The discussion then turned to funding issues, in particular, the potential conflict between the cost of the items called for under the new BiOp and the fact that Congress has been setting the annual CRFM appropriation at about \$80 million in recent years. Ruff advised the action agencies not to allow

these funding uncertainties to limit the items specified for implementation in the one- and five-year plans; rather, he said, I would advise you to plan to implement whatever you feel is necessary to meet your responsibilities under the BiOp, and sort out the funding uncertainties later.

Ultimately, Hevlin observed that the most helpful thing the SCT can do, at this point, is to move forward with the development of the five-year plan at Bonneville; he asked Ruff to provide further guidance on the scope, level of detail and expected content of the one- and five-year plans as additional information becomes available.

**B. Chief Joseph.** Hevlin observed that this plan will likely focus on gas abatement at Chief Joseph.

**C. Grand Coulee.** Monte McClendon said it would likely be appropriate to include both gas abatement and temperature control evaluations in the five-year implementation plan for this project. Right now, we don't have much on the table, although it shouldn't be too difficult to develop a five-year plan for Grand Coulee, McClendon said. He added that Reclamation is more concerned about its ability to make a meaningful contribution to the estuary, lower river and offsite mitigation planning processes.

#### **4. Update on AFEP's Progress on the FY'01 Proposed Studies Review.**

Peters reported that AFEP's Scientific Review Work Group meeting took place in Astoria in October; at that meeting, the deadline for comments on all proposals was set for last week. That comment deadline has now been extended until tomorrow, October 13, Peters said. The current plan is for AFEP to review those comments, then formulate a plan for asking for final proposal solicitations. He noted that he was very concerned about the participation level at this meeting; while I realize that this week-long studies review meeting is a significant commitment of time and manpower for some participants, said Peters, participation this year was so poor that we're wondering whether or not it's worthwhile to continue having these meetings – essentially, the only people who attended were researchers, Corps and NMFS personnel, and a lone participant from BPA. It takes a huge commitment of manpower and financial resources to put the annual studies review meeting together, said Peters; if there is some way we can improve the process to encourage more participation from the states and tribes, we would like to have that discussion.

We intend to bring a list of all of the proposals we are moving forward on to the next SRWG meeting, Peters said; there are likely to be at least a few "bubble" projects, and we may need to set up special meetings to address them. Peters said he would like to have a concrete idea of the funding needed to move forward with the non-controversial studies by the end of November; it will be

necessary to have another meeting to go through all of the proposals, but by the end of November, we would like to be able to begin to move forward on funding the less-controversial studies, he said. Peters warned the SCT that orders for radio tags, PIT-tags, acoustic cameras and other monitoring and evaluation technology will need to be placed very soon; some of those orders have already been placed, and I wanted to make sure everyone was aware that that was occurring, said Peters.

Peters added that the annual AFEP review is scheduled for November 13-16 at the World Trade Center in Portland; the agenda isn't ready yet, but it should be available by early next week. All abstracts are due by October 20, he added.

So by the end of November, the Corps will have a list of the studies for which funding is or will soon be underway? Hevlin asked. Correct, Peters replied – what I want to develop this year is a list of each of the funded measures, the cost of each study, and the relationship of each study to a specific SCT measure, so that this group will have a clear picture of what is being done in FY'01 and what is being spent. Hevlin observed that the next month, while these funding decisions are being made, would be the most appropriate time for any state or tribal entities who have a problem with a given study to make their concerns known to the SCT. That way, he said, we can avoid having those types of discussions in January or February, after a funding decision has already been made.

#### **5. Update on NWP FFDRWG Meetings.**

Peters distributed Enclosure D, a memo covering the items addressed, concerns raised and decisions made at the October 10 FFDRWG meeting. Peters spent a few minutes going through the highlights of the October 10 meeting; please refer to Enclosure D for details of his presentation. The group also spent a few minutes discussing the John Day extended-length screen program for FY'01; Kranda went briefly through Enclosure E, which contains a detailed breakdown of the various construction and research components of next year's John Day ESBS program.

#### **6. Next SCT Meeting Date.**

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Wednesday, November 8, from 9 a.m. to noon at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.